2026 Victorian State Election – Frequently Asked Questions for principals and system leaders

November 2026

1. What is the purpose of this campaign?

A. VCEA is advocating for policy commitments that protect existing Catholic school funding arrangements and support accessible, affordable and high-quality Catholic education.

We are seeking commitments that protect funding certainty, support new and upgraded facilities, and respond to the needs of growing communities.

VCEA asked Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition, the two political groupings that have formed government in recent decades, to respond to five Catholic education priorities affecting schools, students and families.

2. Does the VCEA support or endorse political parties?

A. No. VCEA is working with Catholic school proprietors to engage major political parties in an apolitical fashion on education policy. Its advocacy is directed towards securing policy commitments and informing school communities about those commitments, rather than endorsing any political party or candidate.

Catholic schools may advocate on education policy, including explaining the implications of party commitments, but should not endorse or campaign for or against political parties or candidates.

3. What is the Catholic Education Election Scorecard?

A. The Catholic Education Election Scorecard compares the election commitments of the Victorian Labor Party and the Liberal-National Coalition against VCEA's five Catholic education priorities.

The Scorecard is intended to:

- *help school communities understand party commitments on the issues that will impact them*
- *provide a consistent and factual comparison of commitments made to Catholic education,*
- *promote transparency and accountability.*

The scorecard is being shared with school communities so families can, in the lead up to the state election, understand the policies that may affect their children's education. The full assessment is available at vcea.catholic.edu.au/state-election/.

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4. Why does the scorecard only compare Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition? What about the Greens, One Nation and independent candidates?

A. VCEA has focused on Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition because these are the two political groupings that have formed Victorian governments in recent decades. This is a practical comparison of policy commitments of prospective governments, not an endorsement of parties or candidates.

5. What are the five priorities VCEA is advocating for?

A. VCEA is seeking commitments on:

- ***Recurrent funding certainty: Protect the 25 per cent linkage and rule out cuts:*** *Retain the legislated minimum 25 per cent funding linkage and its existing calculation, and rule out future funding cuts or caps.*
- ***A strong commitment to capital funding:*** *Commit to substantial capital funding over four years to support new Catholic schools in growth areas, additional student places and upgrades to existing facilities.*
- ***Abolish the unfair payroll tax on our schools:*** *Abolish payroll tax on non-government schools, bringing them into line with other Australian jurisdictions.*
- ***Planning reform:*** *Introduce reforms that identify and protect sites for Catholic schools, streamline planning and development approvals, and support the timely delivery of new Catholic schools.*
- ***Early learning infrastructure support:*** *Continue the Building Blocks program throughout the next parliamentary term, ensuring Catholic schools remain eligible for capital grants to establish and expand early learning facilities on school sites.*

Together, these priorities aim to support school affordability, expand educational choice and ensure schools can continue meeting the needs of local communities.

Further information about the five priorities is available at vcea.catholic.edu.au/state-election/.

6. How was the Catholic Education Election Scorecard be prepared?

A. The major parties' positions were assessed using written responses, public commitments and previous positions communicated to VCEA on our key priorities. The ratings are:

- ✓ *Commitment met*
- × Commitment not met.
- ½ Commitment partially met
- ? Position unconfirmed

The full assessment is available at vcea.catholic.edu.au/state-election/.

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7. Should Catholic schools be involved in party politics?

A. Catholic schools can advocate on public policies that affect their students, staff and families without endorsing political parties. Catholic schools educate 21 per cent of Victorian students. We support 218,000 students, 160,000 families and more than 35,000 staff. It is appropriate to keep school communities informed about policy proposals and their potential effects.

This is particularly important when changes to school funding arrangements would have significant implications for school budgets, affordability and educational programs.

8. **Are you telling people how to vote?**

A. No. VCEA is providing information about the parties' education commitments and the evidence used to assess them. Neither VCEA or the scorecard endorses a party or candidate or tells families how to vote. Families can consider the information in the scorecard alongside other issues that matter to them to inform their vote.

9. **Should schools amend or reword VCEA's election communications materials?**

A. No. To ensure consistency and accuracy across Catholic education, we ask schools to distribute VCEA's election scorecard, CEO letter and supporting materials without change.

These materials have been carefully reviewed for legal and regulatory considerations, including Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) guidance on political advocacy. Even well-intentioned changes could alter the meaning of the information or create inconsistencies with VCEA's published assessments.

Schools are welcome to personalise their introductory email or newsletter message, but should retain the key policy information and party commitments as provided by VCEA.

10. Why should the Victorian Government invest in Catholic schools?

A. Catholic schools educate around 21 per cent of Victorian students across 494 schools.

They educate more than 218,000 students from around 160,000 families.

With 90 per cent of Catholic schools charging annual fees of less than $5,000 per student, government support helps keep Catholic education accessible and affordable.

Every student who attends a non-government school reduces demand on the government school system.

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Priority 1: Recurrent funding certainty: Protect the 25 per cent linkage and rule out cuts

11. What is the VCEA seeking on recurrent funding?

A: VCEA is seeking a commitment to retain the legislated minimum 25 per cent funding linkage to Victorian Government recurrent funding for government schools, including the existing basis of calculation. We are also seeking a commitment to rule out cuts, caps or other restrictions that would leave non-government schools receiving less than under existing arrangements.

12. What is happening to Victorian Government recurrent funding for Catholic schools?

A: Labor has stated that Catholic schools will not have their funding cut, however The Age reported on 12 November 2026 that the Labor Government has approved changes to the funding formula that would leave non-government schools receiving less funding than under existing arrangements.

VCEA estimates these changes would leave Victorian Catholic schools more than $200 million worse off over four years, even if overall funding continues to increase.

The Liberal-National Coalition has provided written confirmation that it would retain the existing legislated recurrent funding formula without change. Labor has not committed to retaining the existing formula and how its calculated.

13. How does the legislation work now?

A. In 2015, with the support of the Opposition, the Victorian Labor Government legislated a minimum funding linkage under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic). In broad terms, the minimum Victorian Government recurrent funding allocation for non-government schools is linked to 25 per cent of specified Victorian Government recurrent expenditure per government school student, using a defined expenditure calculation. This is often summarised as 'the 25% linkage'.

This means that increases in relevant Victorian Government expenditure on government schools can flow through to the minimum funding calculation for non-government schools. It does not mean that all government expenditure is included, or that the national Schooling Resource Standard replaces the Victorian calculation.

Recurrent funding supports the day-to-day operation of schools, including teacher salaries and other operating costs. It is separate from capital funding used for new buildings, expansions and upgrades.

14. How does government funding work in the Catholic school system?

A. Government funding helps Catholic schools provide an accessible, high-quality, faith-based education option for around one in five Victorian students.

Catholic schools receive most of their government recurrent funding from the Australian Government, with a smaller contribution from the Victorian Government, alongside school fees and other community contributions.

15. What would a cut to state government recurrent funding mean for Catholic schools?

A. If the funding calculation were changed, capped or otherwise restricted, Catholic schools would receive less than they would under existing arrangements. VCEA's modelling indicates that the potential difference would amount to more than $200 million over four years, depending on the change adopted.

Any reduction compared with existing arrangements would increase pressure on school budgets as Catholic schools meet rising salaries and operating costs, potentially affecting school fees, staffing, educational programs and facilities.

Increases in relevant Victorian Government school expenditure, including eligible teacher salary costs, can affect the existing state funding linkage. Commonwealth recurrent funding is calculated under separate national arrangements and does not automatically rise because Victorian Government school salaries increase.

Priority 2: A strong commitment to capital funding

16. What is the VCEA seeking on capital funding?

A: Both Labor and Coalition governments have historically made commitments towards capital funding to Catholic school infrastructure. VCEA is seeking a commitment of $250 million per annum in capital funding over four years to support the delivery of new Catholic schools in growth areas, additional student places in established areas and important upgrades to existing facilities.

17. Why should the Victorian Government invest in capital funding for Catholic schools?

A: Victoria's population growth is increasing demand for school places, particularly in growth areas. New and expanded government and non-government schools are needed to respond to this demand.

Catholic school communities typically fund more than 85 per cent of their building and infrastructure investment. Victorian Government co-investment helps create additional school places alongside these substantial school community contributions.

Victorian taxpayers also pay less in the long run, saving around $9,000 per annum for each non-government school enrolment. On average, government funding per student is substantially lower in non-government schools, helping reduce public expenditure on education.

18. How do Catholic schools fund capital works now?

A: Catholic school communities fund more than 85 per cent of building and infrastructure investment. Meeting that contribution is becoming more challenging as demand for places grows, building costs increase and families face cost-of-living pressures.

Additional government support would help ensure new schools are built where families need them and existing schools can improve and expand to meet demand.

Successive Victorian governments have committed capital funding for Catholic schools. Capital funding commitments for Catholic schools have also been made by major parties at the 2014, 2018 and 2022 state elections. VCEA is seeking the continuation of this partnership.

19. What is the capital funding split between government and the Catholic sector?

A: Catholic school communities contribute more than 85 per cent of capital investment for school infrastructure, with government grants and other sources supporting the remainder. About 4.5 per cent of the state government's capital works budget goes to Catholic schools.

20. Why does this issue matter to local communities?

A: School infrastructure affects whether children can enrol close to home, the availability of student places and the quality of learning facilities. In growing communities, limited capacity can mean longer travel times and fewer schooling choices.

Priority 3: Abolish the unfair payroll tax on our schools.

21. What is Catholic education seeking on payroll tax?

A: VCEA is seeking a commitment to abolish payroll tax on non-government schools and restore the longstanding exemption for not-for-profit schools.

Victoria is currently the only Australian jurisdiction that levies payroll tax on not-for-profit non-government schools.

22. Why is payroll tax an issue for Catholic schools?

A: Payroll tax is a significant cost for many Catholic schools, with some schools paying more than $1 million each year.

As not-for-profit organisations, schools must absorb these costs through existing budgets, which can reduce the resources available for teaching, learning, student support and school improvements, or increase pressure on fees.

23. How does payroll tax affect students and families?

A. Every dollar spent on payroll tax is a dollar that cannot be invested in students, teachers and school facilities.

At a time when schools are facing increasing cost pressures, removing payroll tax would help schools direct more resources towards education and help maintain affordability for families.

24. Why is abolishing payroll tax important?

A. Catholic schools educate more than 218,000 Victorian students and make a significant contribution to Victoria's education system.

VCEA considers that funds available for school education should be directed towards classrooms, teachers and student learning. Abolishing payroll tax would ease costs for schools and provide greater funding certainty.

Payroll tax currently applies to some Catholic schools. The number of schools affected may change at any time if eligibility is reassessed under the exemption arrangements. There is currently nothing stopping the government from applying this payroll tax to more schools.

25. Do government schools also pay payroll tax?

A. Technically yes, but in practice there is an important difference. For government schools, payroll tax is effectively transferred from one part of the Victorian Government to another. There is no net cost to the government overall.

For Catholic schools subject to payroll tax, it is a real cost paid to government, taking money away from school budgets that could otherwise support students, teachers and facilities.

Priority 4: Planning reform

26. What planning reforms is VCEA seeking?

A: VCEA is seeking reforms to identify and protect sites for Catholic schools, streamline planning and development approvals, and support the timely delivery of new Catholic schools in growing communities.

VCEA is seeking practical reforms that make it easier to identify, secure and develop school sites earlier, particularly in growth areas. Possible measures include:

- *Recognising Catholic school infrastructure as essential community infrastructure within Victoria's planning system.*
- *Earlier identification and protection of suitable school sites in new and growing communities.*
- *Providing streamlined planning and development approval processes for school projects.*
- *Faster assessment pathways where proposed school developments meet established planning requirements.*
- *Introducing planning mechanisms, such as a dedicated Special Education Zone or equivalent, to protect future school sites and reduce delays and land-cost escalation.*
- *Better coordination between government, developers and education providers to ensure schools are delivered alongside housing and other community infrastructure.*

27. Why are planning reforms needed?

A: Victoria's growing communities need schools to be delivered alongside housing and other essential infrastructure. Current planning and land-use arrangements can make suitable sites difficult to secure and can delay the delivery of new schools. These delays can affect the ability of school providers to respond quickly to community demand.

28. Why are planning reforms important?

A: School infrastructure projects can take many years to progress through planning and approval processes. More efficient arrangements can help schools:

- *Respond more quickly to enrolment growth.*
- *Deliver facilities sooner.*
- *Reduce project costs and delays.*
- *Better meet community needs.*

Priority 5: Early learning infrastructure support

29. What is the VCEA seeking on early learning infrastructure?

A: VCEA is seeking continued funding for the Building Blocks program throughout the next parliamentary term, with Catholic school sites remaining eligible for capital grants to establish and expand early learning facilities.

This would support the development of new kindergarten and early learning places across Victoria and help meet growing community demand.

30. Why is ongoing funding for early learning infrastructure important?

A. Victoria's early learning reforms require hundreds of additional kindergarten places across the state.

Meeting this demand will require investment by government and non-government providers. Continued access to capital grants would assist Catholic education expand not-for-profit early learning services and support deliver the additional capacity needed by Victorian families.

31. Why are Catholic schools well placed to deliver early learning services?

A: Many Catholic schools already have established community facilities and strong connections with local families.

Co-located early learning centres can also make use of existing school infrastructure and services, potentially reducing delivery costs and improving convenience for families.

32. How does this benefit children and families?

A. Co-located early learning services can support smoother transitions from kindergarten to primary school, provide more convenient access for families, and help growing communities meet demand for additional places.